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Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields

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Implementation of General Assembly resolutions 50/227 and 52/12 B

Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. The present report responds to Economic and Social Council decision 1997/322, in which the Council decided to continue its consideration of the agenda item on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/227 and requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the question to the Council for consideration at its substantive session of 1998. The mandate, given by the Assembly in its resolution 45/264, for an annual report of the Secretary-General on restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields is also covered in this report.

2. In section I of the report a number of recommendations are made for consideration by the Council with respect to the further implementation of the various provisions of Assembly resolution 50/227. Section II provides information on efforts made by the Assembly and the Council in implementing relevant provisions of the resolution and, where appropriate, also with respect to the provisions contained in General Assembly resolution 52/12 B. The status of implementation of resolution 50/227 is provided in two columns; the left-hand column contains paragraphs of resolution 50/227 that call for action; the right-hand column presents the status of follow-up corresponding to each action-oriented paragraph. The paragraphs of resolution 50/227 that specifically address the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Population Fund (UNDP/UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP) (paras. 76-78) are treated in section IV in order to provide the Council with a clear comparison between the executive boards in their implementation of those paragraphs, which primarily concern their working methods.

3. Some of the provisions of Assembly resolution 50/227 were addressed to the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on an Agenda for Development and the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System. Both working groups completed their work, which culminated in the adoption by the Assembly of resolutions 51/240 and 51/241, respectively. The report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Assembly resolution 51/241 (A/52/855) was submitted to the Assembly in May 1998.

II. Recommendations

4. The recommendations set out below are intended to promote further implementation of Assembly resolution 50/227. They concern (a) the General Assembly; (b) documentation; (c) the Economic and Social Council; (d) inter-agency coordination; and (e) the relationship between the United Nations and the international finance and trade institutions. Following each recommendation, the corresponding paragraph number from resolution 50/227, annex I, on which the proposed recommendation is based, is provided in parentheses where applicable.

Recommendations:

(a) General Assembly

(i) Informal sessions should continue in the form of an open interactive dialogue, including with civil society (para. 19).

(ii) Ways of strengthening cooperation between the Second and Third Committees should continue to be explored, including the possibility of joint consideration of common issues such as poverty, women and development, and the right to development. The bureaux of the Second and Third Committees

could draw lessons from the experiences of the two bureaux of the fifty-second session (para. 21).

(iii) Texts of resolutions could be further streamlined and made more focused, concrete and operational. Submission of omnibus draft resolutions could be encouraged. Another way of making decisions more concrete and operational would be to relate the type of outcome to the kind of mandate it generates, e.g., work programme for the secretariat, policy guidance to the United Nations system, recommendations to Governments, and so forth (para. 24).

(iv) To ensure that the formal debates have value added and do not overlap and repeat debates elsewhere in the system, a few areas of focus could be identified under various agenda items or a few items could be identified for strategic focus in the debates instead of having a formal debate on each item on the agenda, without excluding the possibility of submitting resolutions under the other agenda items (para. 27).

(b) Documentation and related matters

(v) The possibility of consolidating some of the reports that are requested every year should continue to be examined. The Second Committee has initiated the practice of reviewing, at the end of its session, all requests for reports. Such a practice could be more systematically applied to consolidating all decisions taken by an intergovernmental body with a view to providing integrated guidance for the work programme of the Secretariat and leading to consolidated documentation for intergovernmental consideration (para. 34).

(vi) Decisions could be made on the recommendations on the simplification of existing reporting requirements made by the Secretary-General in his reports (A/50/697 and Corr.1, sect. F, and A/51/501, sect. C), taking into account the reports that will be required for the follow-up to United Nations conferences (para. 35).

(c) Economic and Social Council

(vii) The Economic and Social Council may wish to build on the progress made in the implementation of the recommendations in paragraph 39 of annex I to Assembly resolution 50/227 regarding periodic meetings with the bureaux and the secretariats of the functional commissions, other subsidiary and related bodies and the relevant executive boards. The Council may also wish to consider how further progress can be made, taking into account the Secretary-General's reform proposals (A/51/950, para. 134), concerning the Council's organization and methods of work, including the idea of holding its various segments at different pre-established periods during the year, without affecting the total duration of the meetings held by the Council in any given year, and the idea of extending the duration of the operational activities segment.

(viii) As proposed in the report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to conferences (E/1998/19), the Council may wish to encourage all functional commissions to consider including in their agenda a standing item on follow-up to the agreed conclusions of the Council to ensure that the agreed conclusions of the high-level and coordination segments are followed up systematically by the United Nations system (para. 44).

(ix) It may be possible to further streamline and regroup the agenda items in the general segment with the aim of making the council's review of the work of its functional commissions more in line with its managerial and oversight functions and with the objectives of Assembly resolution 50/227. Such an effort

would need to take into account the outcome of the Council's review of its subsidiary bodies. Consideration could also be given to the possibility of having a standing item on the council's agenda on the review of the work of the functional commissions, under which the Council could carry out its responsibility of harmonizing and coordinating their work programmes (paras. 66-67).

(d) Inter-agency coordination

(x) The Council could give consideration to further steps that could be taken to implement the provisions of Assembly resolution 51/240 (the Agenda for Development) regarding inter-agency coordination with a view to (a) engaging the specialized agencies and United Nations funds and programmes in a focused dialogue with the Council to identify ways and means of reflecting the policies and priorities agreed to by the General Assembly in their activities and enhancing coherence and complementarity of efforts of all bodies, taking into account the role of the funds and programmes; ways could also be identified to include the intergovernmental bodies of the agencies in such a dialogue; and (b) improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the Council's activities by enhancing the availability of all relevant information and analyses on system-wide issues from the specialized agencies, including the provision of reports and studies to the Assembly through the Council, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

(e) Relationship between the United Nations and international finance and trade institutions

(xi) The General Assembly and the respective governing bodies of the Bretton Woods institutions, based on the conclusions of the joint exploratory review,[1] could consider further concrete areas and forms of collaboration in the field of development-related activities. The Council may wish to consider appropriate steps to strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions in the light of the review (paras. 86-87).

(xii) The Council may wish to review the format and modalities of future meetings of the high-level special meeting proximate to the semi-annual meetings of the Bretton Woods institutions, based on the experience of the first meeting (para. 88).

III. Progress in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/227

5. The present section contains information on the status of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/227. The dual column layout has been provided for ease of reference. It should be noted that the left-hand column does not necessarily follow the relevant paragraphs of annex I to resolution 50/227 sequentially. Where deemed appropriate, paragraphs that were seen as addressing similar issues have been grouped together in order to provide the Council with a clearer picture of the status of implementation on related matters. Furthermore, the paragraphs on primarily working methods, addressed to the executive boards of the funds and programmes, are treated separately in section IV.

Provisions of General Assembly resolution 50/227, annex I	*Implementation*
I. Funding of operational activities for development of the United Nations system	
... all aspects of funding of United Nations operational activities ... should be examined by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council in accordance with their respective mandates (para. 9).	Pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 50/227, 52/12 B and 52/203, the executive boards of United Nations funds and programmes have been reviewing their current funding arrangements and have developed proposals to halt the decline of their core and non-core resources. The report of the Secretary-General on the 1998 triennial comprehensive policy review of the operational activities for development of the United Nations system (E/1998/48) covers the recent consideration of the subject of core and non-core funding by the executive boards of the funds and programmes. It will be recalled that the Secretary-General, in his report to the Council at its substantive session of 1997 (E/1997/65/Add.1) and his report to the General Assembly (A/52/431), updating the report to the Council, provided detailed information on this issue. Furthermore, in response to Assembly resolution 52/12 B, the issue was discussed more extensively in a note by the Secretary-General (A/52/847), addressing current funding arrangements and the action taken by the executive boards of funds and programmes.
... the Economic and Social Council should consider, on an annual basis in the operational activities segment, the overall financial picture of the funds and programmes ... and make recommendations thereon to the General Assembly and the funds and programmes (para. 11).	
The governing bodies of each programme and fund ... shall adopt ... a specific and realistic target for core resources ... in accordance with relevant decisions taken by the Assembly and the Council, the governing bodies of each programme and fund shall take decisions on their own funding arrangements (para. 12).	
II. General Assembly	
The Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System should be encouraged to consider ... promoting the use of innovative mechanisms, in accordance with the rules of procedure of the General Assembly ... (para. 19).	The use of innovative mechanisms continued to be promoted, which gave additional impetus to a more focused debate in the Committees. In the Second Committee, 13 executive briefings were held by heads of departments, agencies, funds and programmes. The Secretary-General gave a special address on the implementation of the Agenda for Development. Panel discussions with experts from outside the United Nations were held on international migration and population issues and on finance and development issues in emerging markets. A video-conference on the fiftieth anniversary of the Havana conference enabled the Second Committee to interact with a panel organized by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in Geneva. Keynote addresses were given on the international conference on development finance and on the role of public policy in a globalizing economy. The Third Committee also had numerous informal briefings by high-level Secretariat officials and special representatives and rapporteurs, which were considered to be highly useful.
The Secretariat and representatives of the specialized agencies are requested to provide executive briefings, as appropriate, on the matters to be covered under the items on the agenda, at least a week prior to the opening of the General Assembly (para. 31).	

Provisions of General Assembly resolution 50/227, annex I	*Implementation*
There is a need to promote greater coherence and complementarity between the work of the Second and Third Committees (para. 21).	At the fifty-second session of the Assembly, the Bureaux of the Second and Third Committees met to review their respective programmes of work in order to exchange information on the issues discussed in each and to identify potential areas of overlap or duplication. The two Committees held joint briefings on common themes such as poverty, and children and development.
There is a need to consider possible measures to allow for the coordinated consideration of the report of the Economic and Social Council during the General Assembly session (para. 22).	The report of the Economic and Social Council is considered in four of the Main Committees and in plenary meetings. In this regard, consultations between the Bureau of the Council and the Bureaux of the Second and Third Committees took place to discuss the coordinated consideration of the report. Significant improvements have been made in the structure and presentation of the report of the Council to better assist the Assembly in its deliberations. Efforts to make the report more user-friendly and accessible will continue.
To the extent feasible, the discussions in the Second and Third Committees should not commence until after the end of the general debate in the plenary meetings of the General Assembly (para. 23).	The discussions in the Second and Third Committees commenced after the end of the general debate in the plenary meetings of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly.
For issues of a procedural nature, decisions, instead of resolutions, should be used to the maximum extent possible. Resolutions should be shorter, in particular as regards preambular parts. The bureaux, in reviewing the respective agendas, could identify and recommend those individual items or clusters of related items that could be effectively considered in omnibus resolutions (para. 24).	The number of resolutions in the Second Committee was dramatically reduced from 46 in 1994 to 28 in 1996 but slightly increased to 31 in 1997. The Third Committee also achieved a significant reduction in its number of resolutions, from 71 in 1994 to 63 in 1996, but reversed the trend with an increase to 69 in 1997. In most cases their length, in particular of preambular parts, was shortened, in conformity with Assembly resolution 50/227.
... for issues dealing with special economic assistance to individual countries, each resolution could contain ... a common preambular section, while specificity (individual needs) would be maintained within a number of operative paragraphs (para. 26).	General Assembly resolution 52/169 on special economic assistance consists of 13 parts (A-M); each part, however, has its own preambular section.

Provisions of General Assembly resolution 50/227, annex I	*Implementation*
To facilitate discussions based on an integrated approach to development issues, the possibility of choosing a principal theme or themes should be explored to focus substantive debate under each "cluster" in the agenda without prejudice to the right of delegations to raise any other specific issue in the debates (para. 27).	By its resolution 51/241, the Assembly provided for further steps to be taken to rationalize and streamline the agenda, based on the Guidelines on the Rationalization of the Agenda of the General Assembly agreed to by the Assembly in annex I to its resolution 48/264 and, in particular, to make greater use of clustering, biennialization or triennialization of agenda items. The Second Committee began clustering items on its agenda at the fortieth session. In recent years its agenda has undergone a series of modifications pursuant to the provisions of Assembly resolution 50/227. The Second Committee in 1997 made a further attempt to identify subthemes to focus the debate under clusters and subclusters of the agenda at informal consultations organized before the start of the general debate. The Third Committee at the end of each session devotes one or two meetings to a full discussion of its agenda and measures to improve its modus operandi. The work of the Third Committee, organized in two clusters (social and related issues; and human rights and related issues), has been streamlined progressively without diminishing the political relevance of the sensitive issues on the agenda. Informal consultations were held before the start of the general debate in accordance with Assembly resolution 50/227.
Consultations should be held at an early stage, in an organizational session of the Committee, before the start of its general debate, based on proposals from the bureau for decision, on clustering of the agenda, and, where possible, themes and focus for these clusters, taking into account the content of reports presented, as well as on items to be included for discussion or items for decisions and resolutions without formal debate (para. 28).	
III. Documentation and related matters	
The Second Committee should, in accordance with Assembly resolution 48/162, look early in the session into all aspects related to the improvement of the working methods of the Committee (para. 31).	Before the opening of the general debate in 1997, the Chairman of the Second Committee convened informal consultations to discuss ways to improve the working methods of the Committee. Matters discussed included time limits for interventions, deadlines for the submission of resolutions under the various items, the timely start of each meeting, and proposed themes to focus interventions under clusters or subclusters of items, as well as informal briefings and panels parallel to the Committee.

Provisions of General Assembly resolution 50/227, annex I	*Implementation*
There should be greater use of relevant background documents in the Second Committee, such as the *World Economic and Social Survey*, the *Trade and Development Report*, the *World Development Report* and the *World Economic Outlook*; in the preparation of the first two reports, cooperation and coordination between the Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis and the secretariat of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development should be enhanced to ensure more complementarity between the reports (para. 32).	The *World Economic and Social Survey*, will be available for the high-level segment of the Council and an update is submitted to the Second Committee. In addition, the *Trade and Development Report* and the *World Development Report* will be made available to the Second Committee. The *World Economic Outlook* is issued twice a year, in May and October. The consolidation of the three departments in the economic and social areas into a single Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the establishment of the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs have facilitated more effective cooperation and coordination in the preparation of these reports and have resulted in enhanced complementarity between them. In particular, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and UNCTAD have reached a common understanding, including on the preparation of a joint year-end assessment and forecast on the world economy, the *World Economic and Social Survey* and the *Trade and Development Report*, which has been approved by the Secretary-General as part of the United Nations programme of reform.
There should be continued improvement of other reports to make them more concise and action-oriented, by highlighting the critical areas requiring action by the General Assembly and, as appropriate, by making specific recommendations. All documentation should be provided within the specified timetables and page limits and in all official United Nations languages. Efforts should also continue to be made to have all documentation available in electronic form, in particular for distribution on the Internet, in a timely manner and within existing resources (para. 33).	It will be recalled that the Assembly in its resolution 52/214 requested the Secretary-General to direct all departments to include, where appropriate (a) a summary of the report; (b) consolidated conclusions, recommendations and other proposed actions; and © relevant background information. In its resolution 51/241, the Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to pursue an information technology plan with a range of options to provide all permanent missions to the United Nations and the wider public with on-line access to documents and relevant United Nations information. Documents and reports have increasingly been made available in the Optical Disk System and on the Internet in an advance unedited form. The Secretary-General, in his reform proposal (A/51/950, para. 247), indicated that he would take actions to enhance the production and dissemination of documents through electronic means. The Technical Subgroup of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics, chaired by Mr. Ahmad Kamal (Pakistan), has also continued its work on related issues.

Provisions of General Assembly resolution 50/227, annex I	*Implementation*
In order to rationalize and simplify reporting procedures, the Second and Third Committees shall, at the end of their sessions, while reviewing their draft programmes of work for the next sessions, consider procedural decisions regarding requests for reports, including where possible integrated reports on closely related items, as well as items to be inscribed on the agendas for the next sessions ... (para. 34).	Progress thus far in implementing this provision has been limited. The Second Committee, at its previous session, initiated the practice of reviewing all requests for reports. It will be recalled that the Assembly, in its resolution 51/241, requested that all bodies exercise restraint in making proposals containing requests for new reports and consider integrating, biennializing or triennializing the presentation of reports, bearing in mind paragraphs 6 and 7 of General Assembly resolution 50/206 C.
It is noted that the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General to prepare proposals, for consideration by the Council in 1996 and by the General Assembly at its fifty-first session, on the simplification of existing reporting requirements, taking into account the reports that will be required for the follow-up to United Nations conferences (para. 35).	The Secretary-General elaborated on this matter in detail in his progress report to the Assembly at its fiftieth session (A/50/697 and Corr.1, sect. F) and reaffirmed the recommendations in his reports to the Assembly at its fifty-first session (A/51/501, sect. C) and its fifty-second session (A/52/155). It will be recalled that the Assembly in its resolution 51/241 decided that the number of reports requested shall be rationalized where possible so as to permit more focused consideration of issues.
IV. Economic and Social Council	
In the follow-up to United Nations conferences, the Council shall ensure the harmonization and coordination of the agendas and work programmes of the functional commissions by promoting a clearer division of labour among them and providing clear policy guidance to them ... The Council could periodically organize meetings on specific issues to allow for more dialogue with the chairpersons and the secretariats ... of the functional commissions, other subsidiary and related bodies and the relevant executive boards ... (para. 39).	The Bureau of the Council held consultations with the bureaux and the secretariats of the functional commissions on strengthening links among functional commissions in the integrated follow-up to global conferences, streamlining efforts for the overall review of the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women in the year 2000, follow-up to the recommendations of the Council and ensuring continuity of the bureaux of the functional commissions. The Council, at its session in May 1998, held a panel meeting with chairpersons of the functional commissions to discuss coordination issues in the integrated follow-up to conferences as well as with the Chairpersons of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA and UNICEF (see also E/1998/19).
The Council shall hold a shorter, focused substantive session for four weeks in July (para. 40).	This provision came into effect as of the substantive session of 1997. The Council will need to further improve its efficiency in order to accommodate the newly established humanitarian affairs segment.

Provisions of General Assembly resolution 50/227, annex I	*Implementation*
The Secretary-General is requested to prepare a study with a comprehensive assessment of the present arrangements for the Council's sessions (para. 43).	An addendum to the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Assembly resolution 50/227, submitted to the Council at its substantive session of 1997, examined the difference in cost between holding meetings of the Council in New York and Geneva (A/52/155/Add.1-E/1997/68/Add.1). The Council has planned to hold informal consultations under the chairmanship of its Vice-President Mr. Roble Olhaye (Djibouti) on the Council's working methods, including the proposals for reform made by the Secretary-General (A/51/950, para. 134).
The outcome of each segment of the Council should be strengthened and made more action-oriented. Resolutions, decisions and agreed conclusions should be implemented and followed up fully by all relevant parts of the United Nations system. This process should be monitored by the Council and the General Assembly on a regular basis, as appropriate (para. 44).	The high-level segment resulted in agreed conclusions for the first time at the Council's 1997 substantive session, which were brought to the attention of relevant parts of the United Nations system. The agreed conclusions adopted at the coordination segment were also brought to the attention of the United Nations system; a follow-up report is submitted to the Council. The outcomes of the 1998 high-level and coordination segments are expected to take the form of agreed conclusions and would need to be followed up by all relevant bodies and organizations of the United Nations system.
The theme for the general debate of the high-level segment shall be determined ... (para. 53).	Proposals for a theme for 1999 will be submitted to the Council at its substantive session of 1998.
The Secretary-General is requested to include in his report for the high-level segment all relevant issues that could be discussed during the session ... making use of inputs from the various pertinent bodies of the United Nations system ... (para. 54). In order to better focus the policy dialogue, the possibility of having joint reports, prepared by the secretariats of the United Nations, UNCTAD, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization, should be explored (para. 55).	The report of the Secretary-General on the theme of the 1998 high-level segment "Market access: developments since the Uruguay Round, implications, opportunities and challenges, in particular for the developing countries and the least developed among them, in the context of globalization and liberalization" was jointly prepared by the secretariats of UNCTAD and the World Trade Organization. The report entitled "Fostering an enabling environment for development: financial flows, including capital flows; investment; trade" (E/1997/67), submitted to the Council at its high-level segment of 1997, was prepared in close consultation with the Bretton Woods institutions.

Provisions of General Assembly resolution 50/227, annex I	*Implementation*
The outcome of the high-level segment should normally be in the form of agreed conclusions and should be followed up by all relevant bodies and organizations of the United Nations system (para. 56).	(See also implementation concerning para. 44, above.) The agreed conclusions have been brought to the attention of all relevant bodies and organizations of the system and to the General Assembly as part of the annual report of the Council to the Assembly. In its resolution 52/182, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General, in collaboration with the secretariat of UNCTAD, to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session on recommendations for effective follow-up to the relevant sections of agreed conclusions 1997/1 of the Economic and Social Council on fostering an enabling environment for development. The Assembly furthermore requested the Secretary-General, in collaboration with the secretariat of UNCTAD, to report orally on the implementation of Assembly resolution 52/182, including developments in the multilateral trading system. These reports will be presented to the Assembly as requested.
The agreed conclusions of the Council concerning the selection of cross-cutting themes common to major international conferences and/or the contribution to an overall review of the implementation of the programme of action of a United Nations conference should be implemented. At the organizational session of the Council, consideration should be given to choosing a second theme dealing with concrete sectoral issues ... (para. 57).	The Council, by its decision 1997/319, decided on the theme for the coordination segment of its 1998 substantive session: "Coordinated follow-up to and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action". No second theme was chosen.
The implementation of the agreed conclusions of the coordination segment should be followed up in the general segment of the following year (para. 59).	The provision that the implementation of the agreed conclusions of the coordination segment should be followed up in the general segment of the following year has been implemented since the substantive session of 1997.
The primary function of the general segment as that of an action-oriented review of the activities, reports and recommendations of the Council's subsidiary bodies should be consolidated, avoiding a repetition of the debates held in those bodies and focusing attention on major policy issues that require a prioritized and coordinated response from the United Nations system as a whole (para. 66).	The Secretary-General, in his reform proposal (A/51/950), noted that the general segment should be more focused and policy-oriented, giving sufficient attention to the linkages between the reports of the subsidiary bodies. A consolidated report on the reports of subsidiary bodies will be submitted to the Council to assist its coordination role by highlighting the linkages between the activities of subsidiary bodies and major policy issues arising from them.
The Council should regularly review the agenda of its general segment with a view to discontinuing consideration of items that are not relevant to the work of its subsidiary machinery or are duplicative of items on the agenda of the General Assembly, and distinguish more clearly between items on the agenda requiring decisions and those for information only (para. 67).	The Council reviewed its agenda and related documentation requirements at its organizational session in February 1998.

Provisions of General Assembly resolution 50/227, annex I	*Implementation*
The subsidiary bodies should be requested to include in their reports an executive summary ... and the issues that may require attention and/or action by the Council. The Secretariat should consolidate these issues in a single document ... (para. 68).	All reports of the subsidiary bodies include an executive summary. A consolidated report on the outcomes of the functional commissions is submitted to the Council.
The arrangements in the General Assembly and in the Economic and Social Council for considering the coordination of humanitarian assistance and special economic assistance to individual countries and regions should be reviewed during the fifty-first session of the General Assembly (para. 25).	The Assembly by its resolution 52/12 B decided to establish a humanitarian affairs segment of the Council, with effect from 1998, and, in this connection, requested the Council to consider expeditiously the related practical arrangements and make an early recommendation to the Assembly, without prejudice to the work of the other segments of the Council. The Council will hold a humanitarian affairs segment for two days during its substantive session of 1998, on the understanding that this year's practice will not set any precedent for future sessions.
Provision should be made for the integration and coordination of humanitarian and emergency assistance activities ... (para. 69).	
V. Functional and regional commissions and expert groups	
The Council shall undertake ... a review of the mandates, composition, functions and working methods of its functional commissions and expert groups and bodies, ensuring more effective and coordinated discussions and outcomes of their work ... Such a review should be completed by the fifty-second session of the General Assembly ... (paras. 70 and 71).	The Assembly in its resolution 52/12 B invited the Council to consider, at its organizational and substantive sessions in 1998, as part of the review as mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 50/227, the recommendations of the Secretary-General relating to the reform of its subsidiary bodies and to report thereon to the Assembly as early as possible during its fifty-second session. Informal consultations have been under way since March 1998 under the chairmanship of the Vice-President of the Council, Mr. Anwarul Karim Chowdhury (Bangladesh), to continue the review of the four priority bodies,[2] the functional commissions with responsibilities for follow-up to major conferences, other subsidiary bodies and the regional commissions. The outcome of the informal consultations is to be reported to the Council at its substantive session of 1998.

Provisions of General Assembly resolution 50/227, annex I	*Implementation*
The Council shall provide for the review of the regional commissions, with a view to strengthening and enhancing their effectiveness as action- and policy-oriented bodies in the economic and development fields with better response to the conditions and environments unique to the specific regions; improving their coordination with the entire United Nations system, including the specialized agencies, the Bretton Woods institutions and the regional development banks; strengthening their active participation relating to the implementation at the regional level of the results of major United Nations conferences; and encouraging them also to undertake their own management and functional assessments towards these ends ... (paras. 74-75).	The Assembly in its resolution 52/12 B also invited the Council, in consultation with Member States and appropriate intergovernmental regional bodies, to conduct a general review of the regional commissions at its substantive session of 1998, bearing in mind the relevant provisions of Assembly resolution 50/227 and the individual reviews each commission has already carried out, in order to consider the competencies of the regional commissions, taking into account the competencies of global bodies and other regional and subregional intergovernmental bodies, and to submit a report thereon to the General Assembly before the end of its fifty-second session. The Executive Secretaries of the regional commissions briefed the delegations regarding the reform exercise undertaken in their respective commissions. The report of the Secretary-General on regional cooperation addresses the review of the regional commissions (see E/1998/65). Informal consultations under the chairmanship of the Vice-President of the Council, Mr. Anwarul Karim Chowdhury (Bangladesh) will be held to examine the issue.

VI. Governing bodies of the United Nations development programmes and funds[3]

VII. Inter-agency coordination

In the context of the discussions on an agenda for development, a close review shall be made of the relationship of the Economic and Social Council with the specialized agencies (para. 79).	The Assembly by its resolution 51/240 adopted the Agenda for Development.[4] The Council's interaction with the specialized agencies and the funds and programmes takes place in many forms. At the session of the Council held from 13 to 15 May 1998 on the coordinated follow-up to conferences, the Council had an intensive dialogue with panels composed of agencies that had chaired the inter-agency task forces (the World Bank, the International Labour Organization and the United Nations Population Fund). The specialized agencies participate regularly in the Council's discussions on issues of common concern. The agencies also propose specific items for the Council's agenda. The Council could invite, from time to time, executive heads and the chairpersons of the governing bodies of specialized agencies to interact with it on system-wide coordination and cooperation issues.

Provisions of General Assembly resolution 50/227, annex I	*Implementation*
The Administrative Committee on Coordination should present the thematic aspects of its report to the Council at its coordination segment and the remaining parts at the general segment; the members of the Administrative Committee on Coordination should engage in an active dialogue with the Council on ways to improve inter-agency coordination (para. 81).	In response to the Council's request for regular briefings on the outcomes of sessions of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), the Secretary-General addressed the Council at its organizational session for 1998 and a further briefing was given at the resumed organizational session of the Council in May. The annual overview report of ACC for 1997 (E/1998/21) is to be considered during the general segment of the Council under the item on coordination, programme and other questions. This could be an important occasion for forging stronger links between the Council and ACC by engaging in more substantive interaction with ACC members, using the report before the Council as the main basis for the discussion.
The periodic meetings of all concerned senior secretariat officials in the economic and social sectors, under the authority of the Secretary-General, should continue to be used to improve coordination and performance; the outcomes of these meetings should be presented on a regular basis to the Economic and Social Council (para. 82).	The Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs and the Executive Committee of the United Nations Development Group meet regularly to promote effective coordination among the substantive departments of the Secretariat and operational bodies. The Senior Management Group, comprising the convenors of the four executive committees (peace and security, humanitarian affairs, economic and social affairs and development) and additional senior managers, continues to meet on a regular basis as the Secretary-General's cabinet and the central policy planning body.
VIII. Relationship between the United Nations and international finance and trade institutions	
The issues relating to the strengthening of the relationship between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions, and possibly also the World Trade Organization, shall be particularly considered in the context of the deliberations on an agenda for development ... (para. 84).	The Agenda for Development addressed the need for increased interaction and cooperation between the United Nations and multilateral development institutions, including the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization, and the need to develop further effective and innovative approaches to their interaction and cooperation (General Assembly resolution 51/240, paras. 276-282).
There is a need for an early exploratory review to be prepared jointly by the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions ... with a view to identifying areas in which communication, cooperation and coordination could be improved. ... The General Assembly and the respective governing bodies of the Bretton Woods institutions, based on the conclusions of the above review, should consider concrete areas and forms of collaboration in the field of development-related activities (paras. 86-87).	The review was led by the UNDP Administrator in collaboration with United Nations departments, funds and programmes and in cooperation with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The report of the Secretary-General on the review is before the Council at its present session (E/1998/61) and information on the review will be provided to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session.

Provisions of General Assembly resolution 50/227, annex I	*Implementation*
In order to improve communication and cooperation at the intergovernmental level between the Council and the international financial and trade institutions ... the Council should schedule periodically a high-level special meeting at a time proximate to the semi-annual meetings of the Bretton Woods institutions ... (para. 88).	The special high-level meeting held on 18 April 1998 following the meeting of the Development Committee of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund was the first of its kind to be convened as envisaged by the Assembly in its resolution 50/227 and the Agenda for Development (Assembly resolution 51/240, paras. 277 and 279). The Bureau of the Economic and Social Council informed the Council of the suggestions, including the format and the theme, related to the special high-level meeting. A brief background note (E/1998/9) identifying issues and questions on the theme "Global financial integration and development and recent issues" was prepared by the United Nations in collaboration with the Bank and the Fund. The meeting was generally considered to be a success; it was well attended by ministers and senior officials dealing with finance, economic and development cooperation matters and generated a lively and substantive dialogue in an informal atmosphere and received good press coverage.
IX. Secretariat	
The present structure and functioning of the Secretariat, including the economic and social departments and the question of establishing a post of Deputy Secretary-General for International Cooperation and Development, shall be considered in the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System and in the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on an Agenda for Development (para. 89).	The Assembly, by its resolution 52/12 B, decided to establish the post of Deputy Secretary-General and the appointment was made by the Secretary-General following consultations with Member States and in accordance with Article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations. The three departments concerned with economic and social development issues (Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis and Department for Development Support and Management Services) have been consolidated into a single Department of Economic and Social Affairs.
In the context of the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System, uniform and maximum terms of service for heads of programmes and funds and other Economic and Social Council and General Assembly bodies should be considered ... (para. 90).	It will be recalled that in resolution 51/241, the Assembly, having affirmed its role in approving appointments and extension of terms, stated that uniform terms of office of four years, renewable once, should be introduced for the executive heads of programmes, funds and other bodies of the Assembly and the Council. The Assembly also encouraged the specialized agencies to consider uniform terms and term limits for their executive heads. The Secretary-General, in his report on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 51/241, concurred with the above-mentioned decision; the position of the Assembly will be brought to the attention of the agencies concerned (see A/52/855, paras. 64-65).

IV. Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Food Programme

6. Paragraphs 76 to 78 of annex I to General Assembly resolution 50/227 contain provisions for the governing bodies of the United Nations programmes and funds. In paragraph 76, the Assembly requested that the executive boards consider adjustments to their agendas, reporting procedures and format, and that they review the number and scheduling of meetings and sessions, with a view to continuing the rationalization of the working methods of the boards. In paragraph 77, the Assembly asked the governing bodies to describe in their reports how the overall policy guidance and coordination provided by the Assembly and the Council had been implemented, and to give specific recommendations for further action. In paragraph 78, the Assembly requested that the effective participation of observer member States and observer States in the sessions of the executive boards be facilitated and that the arrangements, working methods and rules of procedure be reviewed. The efforts made by the executive boards to respond to these recommendations are summarized below.

	UNDP/UNFPA	*UNICEF*	*WFP*
Implementation of guidance from the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council	The Executive Board, in its decision 97/15 entitled "Change management", adopted at the annual session of 1997, recalled the legal framework of UNDP,[5] as well as General Assembly resolutions 47/199 and 50/120 on operational activities for development, and stressed the importance of their full implementation; the Board also welcomed measures taken by UNDP to improve its capacity to support the resident coordinator system, within the context of General Assembly resolutions 32/197, 44/211, 47/199 and 50/120. The Executive Board reviewed and took note of the report on follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56 on Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations. In follow-up to General Assembly resolution 50/120 and Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/42, the format for harmonization of presentation of the biennial support budgets of UNDP and UNFPA was approved by the Executive Board at its first regular session of 1997. The Executive Board, by its decision 97/14 on the five-year review of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), invited the President of the Executive Board to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session, through the Economic and Social Council, a proposal for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action.	At its first regular session, the Executive Board discussed the follow-up to the Council's resolutions related to operational activities of the United Nations for development, as input to the Council's substantive session of 1998.[6] The Executive Board also approved the biennial support budget for 1998-1999, the first prepared according to the harmonized presentation format agreed to by the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA and UNICEF, and the 1998 work plan. The Executive Board requested the secretariat to work with the UNDP and UNFPA secretariats to further assess and develop the harmonized budget presentation. At the annual session in June, the Executive Board is to have the opportunity to review the follow-up of major United Nations conferences and summits, with particular emphasis on the World Summit for Children and ICPD; it will also review the status of implementation of the Management Excellence Programme of UNICEF, as well as the status of implementation of some of the major organizational policies and strategies.[9] The Board will also consider a draft policy on information, publications and communication.	The revised General Regulations of WFP[7] were endorsed by the Economic and Social Council in its decision 1997/217 and by the FAO Council at its 112th session, and were approved by the FAO Conference (resolution 11/97) and by the General Assembly in its decision 52/449. The new General Regulations of WFP entered into effect on 1 January 1998.[8] The revised Financial Regulations were approved provisionally, effective 1 January 1998. The Board decided that the Financial Regulations would be reconfirmed once the General Regulations were adopted by the General Assembly and the FAO Conference. Reaching an agreement on the adjustments needed for its long-term resource and financing policies remains a challenge on the WFP's reform agenda; the set of policies approved by the governing body in 1995, which came into effect in 1996, is being reviewed through informal consultations with the Board.

	UNDP/UNFPA	*UNICEF*	*WFP*
Number and scheduling of meetings and sessions	The Executive Board continued to rationalize its working methods in 1997 and early 1998. Three regular sessions and one annual session were held in 1997, with the same planned for 1998. In 1997, 39 informal meetings were held, often with the purpose of providing a forum for consultations which would allow for more efficient formal sessions of the Board. In 1998, it was decided that, to the extent possible, the first regular session would be devoted to UNDP matters while the second regular session would be devoted to UNFPA matters, an example of further rationalization of the Board's working methods. An unprecedented joint session of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA and UNICEF was held on 26 January 1998 to review the progress in implementing United Nations reform at the country level. The secretariats of the two bodies continue to work closely in scheduling the meetings of the Boards, and in identifying possible areas of common interest for future joint sessions of the Boards. Consecutive meetings of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA and UNICEF have been scheduled whenever possible.	The Executive Board discussed and agreed to the programme of work at its third regular session of September 1997. The number of Board sessions was reduced from four in 1997 to three in 1998, with the clustering of related issues into sessions. It was decided that the burden of work of the Board for the year would guide the number of sessions. The 1999 work plan issue will be decided at the second regular session, in September 1998. The UNICEF secretariat continues to schedule pre-Board information meetings some weeks before each Board session, to allow more time for follow-up consultation between New York delegations and their capitals, and between delegations and the secretariat.	Consistent with General Assembly resolution 48/162, the former WFP governing body, the Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes, was replaced by an Executive Board, effective 1 January 1996. The Board has 36 members and holds one annual session and three regular sessions a year. Each year at its first regular session, the Executive Board elects a Bureau of five members, one from each WFP electoral list.
Agendas and organization of work	An annual work plan for the Executive Board was initiated with the approval of the work plan for 1997 at the first regular session of 1997. When possible, items of concern to both UNDP and UNFPA were considered jointly (e.g., work plan for 1997, harmonization of presentation of budgets, reports to the Economic and Social Council and internal oversight and accountability).	In 1998, the UNICEF Executive Board has 23 items on its work programme for the year, down from 33 in 1997. These items are organized into one annual (1-5 June) and two regular sessions (26-28 and 30 January and 8-11 September).	The WFP Executive Board now routinely establishes an annual work programme for the forthcoming year at its previous regular session. The annual work programme includes a tentative schedule of sessions and pre-session briefings; the Bureau of the board is consulted on the need for working groups.

	UNDP/UNFPA	*UNICEF*	*WFP*
Participation of observers	The UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board rules of procedure, adopted at the annual session of 1997, provide for the following in rule 16, paragraph 1: "Any State member of UNDP or UNFPA who is not a member of the Executive Board may attend Board meetings and, based on General Assembly resolutions 48/162 and 50/227, which, *inter alia*, call for the facilitation of the effective participation of observer Member States and observer States, may participate in its deliberations without the right to vote."	As required by Assembly resolution 48/162 and the rules of procedure of the UNICEF Executive Board, observer delegations have the right to participate in all formal and informal meetings and to receive all Board documentation contained in the daily list of documents, issued at Headquarters. Starting in the summer of 1997, advance copies of Board documents are now posted in the UNICEF Intranet for member and observer countries, UNICEF national committees and country offices.	The WFP Executive Board has stipulated that member States who manifest a special interest in the item or items being discussed may be invited to participate in the deliberations without the right to vote. In addition, representatives of appropriate United Nations bodies are invited to all sessions of the board. Other organizations with a special interest may also be invited, at their request, to attend sessions.[10]
Reporting and documentation	At its third regular session of 1996, the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board adopted decision 96/45 on documentation, in which, *inter alia*, the Board established strict page limits for documents to be submitted to the Executive Board and decided, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 50/206, that documents must be submitted to the Office of Conference and Support Services 10 weeks before the start of the session.	The UNICEF secretariat continues to improve the use of time during each session, and to rationalize the documents presented at each session. The page limits set for documents pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 50/11 and 50/206 are followed by the UNICEF secretariat.	Documentation is made available to all observers at their request. Since October 1996, all Executive Board documentation in all four official languages is posted on the WFP Web site. Documentation has been shortened and focuses on key decisions and action-oriented recommendations.[11] All verbatim records have been abolished.
Rules of procedure	The rules of procedure of the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board were adopted by the Board at its annual session of 1997.	The revised rules of procedure adopted by the UNICEF Executive Board in 1994 continue to set the overall framework for the conduct of Board business.	The working group established in February 1998 to revise the rules of procedure to ensure consistency with all major General Assembly and Economic and Social Council resolutions, including compliance with all reporting requirements, is expected to report to the Executive Board at its third regular session of 1998.

Notes

[1] See the report of the Secretary-General on the joint exploratory review of cooperation between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions (E/1998/61).

[2] The four priority bodies are the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, the Committee for Development Planning, the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development and the Committee on Natural Resources.

[3] See section IV of the present report.

[4] The Assembly stated in paragraphs 251 and 252 of the Agenda for Development that the Council should continue to strengthen its role as the central mechanism for coordination of the United Nations system and its specialized agencies and to ensure a coordinated follow-up to the implementation of major United Nations conferences through its subsidiary machinery and provide overall guidance and coordination to the United Nations system as a whole. The Secretary-General, in paragraph 266, was invited to make recommendations on the coordination of the policies and activities of the specialized agencies. In paragraph 267, the Assembly stated that mechanisms should be elaborated to enable the Council, within its mandate, to provide guidance to specialized agencies and to transmit institutional priorities as formulated by the Assembly and that the specialized agencies and the United Nations funds and programmes should engage in a focused dialogue with the Council with a view to identifying how their activities could be adjusted in response to such priorities; the Assembly also stated that the Council should provide appropriate recommendations in order to ensure coherence and complementarity of efforts of all bodies, taking into account the role of the funds and programmes. In paragraph 268, the Assembly pointed out that the effectiveness and efficiency of the Council's activities could be improved by increasing interaction with specialized agencies, including the provision of regular reports to the Assembly, through the Council, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter.

[5] Including General Assembly resolution 2688 (XXV) of 10 December 1970.

[6] Issues addressed include country level coordination of the funds and programmes, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, strengthening of the resident coordinator system, common premises and services, monitoring and evaluation activities, country notes, HIV/AIDS, and the follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits.

[7] During 1996 and 1997, an open-ended working group was established by the Bureau of the Executive Board of the World Food Programme to bring the General and Financial Regulations of WFP in line with the most recent decisions of the United Nations and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and to remove outdated or superseded provisions. The working group, which consisted of members from each of the five regions represented on the Board, conducted its business in close collaboration with the secretariat and relied on the advice of the WFP/FAO Legal Counsel, as well as the FAO Finance Committee and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions.

[8] The basic constitution of WFP and its role in the United Nations system will continue to be amended through the Economic and Social Council, the FAO Council, the FAO Conference and the General Assembly. Operational issues and points of detail, however, will henceforth not be covered in the General Regulations but in Rules, which may be amended by the Executive Board as circumstances require.

[9] Such as the health strategy adopted in 1995, the policy regarding national committees and the policies and strategies on children in need of special protection measures.

[10] Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 50/8 of 1 November 1995, the Executive Board has established a working group charged with reviewing the distribution of seats, the results of which will enter into force on 1 January 2000.

[11] At the end of each session, a brief paper containing the key decision and/or recommendations is prepared by the rapporteur and provided to Board members for endorsement. A brief summary of the work is also sent to Board members.